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JNCHC

JOURNAL OF THE
NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL

HONORS AND THE CREATIVE ARTS

JOURNAL EDITORS

ADA LONG

DAIL MULLINS

RUSTY RUSHTON

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

The National Collegiate Honors Council is an association of faculty, students, and others interested in honors education. *G. Hewett Joiner*, **President**, Georgia Southern University; *Rosalie Otero*, **President-Elect**, University of New Mexico; *Donzell Lee*, **Vice President**, Alcorn State University; *Earl Brown, Jr.*, **Exec Sec/Treas**, Radford University; *Joan Digby*, **Immediate Past President**, Long Island University CW Post. **Executive Committee** *Brian Adler*, Valdosta State University; *Elizabeth Beck*, Iowa State University; *Ronald Brandolini*, Valencia Community College; *K. Celeste Campbell*, Oklahoma State University; *Ryan Commerson*, Gallaudet University; *Morgan Anne Good*, SUNY Potsdam; *Herald Kane*, San Diego City College; *Ann Raia*, College of New Rochelle; *Kathy Rogers*, University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa); *Jon Schlenker*, University of Maine (Augusta); *Blake Standish*, University of New Mexico; *Shirley Thomas*, John Brown University; *Casey Tippens*, Oklahoma State University; *Natalia Valenzuela*, Columbia College; *Stephen Wainscott*, Clemson University; *Norman L. Weiner*, SUNY Oswego; *Jack White*, Mississippi State University; *John Zubizarreta*, Columbia College.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council is a refereed periodical publishing scholarly articles on honors education. The journal uses a double-blind peer review process. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education. Submissions may be forwarded in hard copy, on disk, or as an e-mail attachment. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to: Ada Long / JNCHC / UAB Honors Program / HOH / 1530 3rd Avenue South/Birmingham, AL 35294-4450 / Phone: (205) 934-3228 / Fax: (205) 975-5493 / E-mail: adalong@uab.edu.

DEADLINES

March 1 (for spring/summer issue); September 1 (for fall/winter issue).

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CONTENTS

Call for Papers.....	5
Submissions Guidelines.....	5
Dedication	7
Editor’s Introduction, Rusty Rushton	9

TEACHING THE CREATIVE ARTS

<i>An Architect’s Foray Into Honors,</i> Betsy West	15
<i>“The Play’s the Thing”: Theater Arts and Liberal Learning,</i> Margaret Franson.....	21
<i>Media Literacy and Liberation: Honors Students as Prophetic Artists and Critics</i> Page R. Laws	27
<i>Bringing Imagination into the Community Through a Poetry-Writing Honors Course,</i> Diann A. McCabe.....	43
<i>Seeing the World Anew: Creative Arts in the Honors Curriculum,</i> Sara L. Sanders and Janet S. Files.....	47
<i>Honors Students in the Creative Writing Classroom: Sequence and Community</i> Margaret C. Szumowski.....	59

CONTENTS

SPLICING THE CREATIVE ARTS INTO NON-ARTS COURSES

<i>Could Aristotle Teach the Honors Courses I Envision? Theory and Practice in the Arts,</i> L. Luis Lopez.....	73
<i>Honors and the Creative Arts in Nursing: Music Therapy to Decrease Anxiety in Critical Care Patients,</i> Ellen B. Buckner and Cynthia Leach-Fuller.....	77
<i>“Expressive Technology”: Multimedia Projects in Honors Courses,</i> Patricia B. Worrall.....	83
<i>Jesters Freed from their Jack-in-the-Boxes: Or Springing Creativity Loose from Traditionally Entrenched Honors Students,</i> Leslie A. Donovan.....	93
<i>The Evolution of Aesthetic Response in Honors Students,</i> Tammy Ostrander.....	105

A STUDENT PLAY

<i>When Austen’s Heroines Meet: a Play in One Act,</i> Stephanie Fosnight.....	113
Authors’ Bios.....	137
NCHC Publications order forms.....	143

CALL FOR PAPERS

JNCHC is now accepting articles for the Spring/Summer 2002 issue. Articles may be on any topic consistent with our editorial policy (see page 2 of this issue).

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS MARCH 1, 2002.

The subsequent issue of *JNCHC* (deadline September 1, 2002) will be dedicated to the topic of *Technology in Honors*.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1. We will accept material by e-mail attachment, disk, or hard copy. We will not accept material by fax.
2. The documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author's primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), but please avoid footnotes. Internal citation is preferred; end notes are acceptable.
3. There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.
4. Accepted essays will be edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for obvious infelicities of style or presentation. Variations in matters such as "honors" or "Honors," "1970s" or "1970's," and the inclusion or exclusion of a comma before "and" in a list will usually be left to the author's discretion.
5. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to:

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Dedication



JERRALD L. BOSWELL

With love and sorrow, this issue of the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* is dedicated to Jerrald Boswell, who died of pneumonia on September 12, 2001. Jerrald was Managing Editor of JNCHC from its beginning in the spring of 2000 through the previous issue (Vol. 2, No. 1, spring/summer 2001), which he made sure was at the printer's before he went into the hospital. Without Jerrald, the resurrection of a national scholarly journal in Honors might never have occurred. He devoted extraordinary amounts of his time and energy to designing, laying out, promoting, printing, and distributing this journal as well as the numerous other publications that emanate from the Honors Program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He was a graduate of the program (1986) with extensive subsequent background in the publishing industry, primarily in New York City. Fortunately for us, he returned to Birmingham for the last four years of his life and was an instructor in the Honors Program as well as editor and/or managing editor of all its publications, including *Sanctuary*, a literary journal that he founded and fathered into existence. Jerrald was talented, beautiful, funny, generous, loving, skillful, and utterly irreplaceable. All of his friends on the editorial staff—including his dear friend Mitch Pruitt, who has volunteered to carry on Jerrald's work as Managing Editor of JNCHC—carry him in our hearts as we try to continue his work. It will never be as much fun.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

RUSTY RUSHTON

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

I attended a poetry reading at the University of Virginia not long ago at which the poet slated to read, who was on the Creative Writing faculty of the English Department there, was introduced by a professor and friend of his from the *literature* side of their Department. In his comments, the professor, whose primary scholarly work was in literary criticism but who also wrote poetry, presented the following distinction, based on his own experience, between the writing of criticism and the writing of poetry. He said that he'd been frantically working on an essay about poetic form in the early American modernist period and that the endeavor was driving him crazy, but that he knew he'd be able to finish it. He said he also knew that, once he was finished, he'd be able to write other critical essays about other issues in poetry—he might not choose to do so, of course, but there was no doubt in his mind he would be able to if he wanted. Why was he so confident? He explained that he'd accumulated the kind of literary-critical education over the years that would enable him always to turn his critical attention profitably toward new subject matters.

Not so with the writing of poetry, he then added tersely, for he never knows when or even if the impetus to write a poem will strike. And when it does strike, he continued, and once he's actually completed a poem, he is invariably left with the dispiriting feeling that, for all he knows, he may never write another one. The professor then segued into his admiration for the courage it must take to fashion an entire career out of the writing of poetry—his admiration, in short, for his friend whose task it was to read poems to us that evening.

Honors students like to *know* what they're doing academically. They like to *know* that if they get organized, put in the hours, deny the pleasures, meet with the teachers—in short, if they accumulate the education that's been assigned to them—they will succeed.

But what if the assignment is to write a poem? What if the assignment is to enact a character in a play or to compose a violin sonata? Think how many mediocre poems, sonatas, and character enactments have been produced by hours of earnest hard work. And think, too, how many brilliant iterations of the same have burst forth more or less spontaneously. What risk there is in donning the mantle of an artist! A Friday evening of anxious cogitation and a missed fraternity party, and what gets produced? A clumsy sonnet or two?

And let's say an exceptionally fine sonnet or sonata does emerge: how dependable are the accolades that accompany such success? Are student artifacts perceived (by students themselves, by parents, by Americans in general) to hold anything like the same degree of clout that A's in Chemistry do? Are even honors programs always sufficiently supportive of the deft villanelle, the transcendent aria?

EDITORS INTRODUCTION

This issue of JNCHC is devoted to the difficult joys of teaching the creative arts in honors classes and to the desire felt by many honors educators that more such teaching be administered. Our submissions have been broken into two principal sections followed by a general query and an award-winning student play. The first section comprises articles on the teaching of particular art forms to honors students. Betsy West, in “An Architect’s Foray Into Honors,” discusses the nature and importance of “visual form[s] of learning,” drawing upon the kinds of creative exercises employed in beginning architecture classes but showing, too, how such exercises might be put to more general use. Margaret Franson, in “*The Play’s the Thing: Theater Arts and Liberal Learning*,” explains how a mandatory theatrical arts component of the freshman interdisciplinary program at Valparaiso University (in short, a musical written and performed by the freshman honors class) not only fosters creativity, but actually exposes students to most if not all of the essential facets of a liberal arts education. Film-making, film-criticism, and the growing need for young people to become media-savvy constitute the tripartite subject matter of “Media Literacy and Liberation: Honors Students as Prophetic Artists and Critics,” an essay by Page Laws that offers a plan for enabling honors students to join what Cornell West sees as the most crucial academic *resistance* to western mercantile culture.

The three remaining articles in this first section focus on the teaching of poetry, though in three very different circumstances. In “Bringing Imagination into the Community Through a Poetry-Writing Honors Course,” Diann McCabe describes a most ambitious endeavor in which a class of honors students at Southwest Texas State University, after spending a few weeks immersed in Kenneth Koch’s books on teaching poetry to children, take on leadership roles in a nearby elementary school, setting up and running an eight-weeks long poetry-writing workshop for grade-schoolers. Sara Sanders and Janet Files, in “Seeing the World Anew: Creative Arts in the Honors Curriculum,” make a case for getting creative writers off campus, listing and analyzing the kinds of exercises in creativity that can yield excellent results when administered under the influence of a professional writer, a lazy river, and a free weekend. And finally, poet and professor Margaret Szumowski takes us through what are for her the six essential classroom-style poetry-writing exercises for honors students in an essay entitled “Honors Students in the Creative Writing Classroom: Sequence and Community.”

The second section of the journal presents four articles that describe how elements of creative-arts pedagogy can be successfully spliced into honors courses of a more traditional sort. In “Could Aristotle Teach the Honors Courses I Envision?” Luis Lopez reflects upon his years of studying and practicing the art of Spanish Colonial tin work in his native state of New Mexico in order to make an impassioned plea for the inclusion of art-making itself in the art-history classroom. Ellen Buckner and Cynthia Leach-Fuller help bridge the gap between the creative-arts and science in their essay “Honors and the Creative Arts in Nursing,” which examines the use of music therapy to regulate anxiety among critical care patients. The inclusion of web-design components of otherwise traditional research projects serves as the catalyst for Patricia Worrall’s reflections in “*Expressive Technology: Multimedia Projects in Honors Courses*.” Leslie Donovan’s “Jesters Freed from their Jack-in-the-Boxes: Or

RUSTY RUSHTON

Springing Creativity Loose from Traditionally Entrenched Honors Students” presents an evaluative account of some creative-writing exercises (tell the story from the witch’s perspective; write a handful of Dantean stanzas of your own; etc.) designed to put students in contact with not only the themes, but also the *means*, of a given literary text. Completing this second section of the journal is Tammy Ostrander’s essay “The Evolution of Aesthetic Response in Honors Students,” which follows a group of honors students on a term-long mission—through quarrelsome museum tours, sculpture-garden high jinks, and class discussions sprawled over restaurant tables—to respond meaningfully to the question “What is art?”

For a final treat, we have reproduced Portz prize-winning honors student Stephanie Fosnight’s one-act play *When Austen’s Heroines Meet*, a superbly imagined parlor drama in which the likes of Elizabeth Bennett, Emma Woodhouse, Catherine Morland, Anne Elliot, and Marianne Dashwood miraculously find themselves in the same room and are able finally, as it were, to compare notes.

Getting students to enter the domain of art-making is and will continue to be difficult for honors programs. Our students typically need to feel that their paths to academic success are, if unavoidably steep, at least clearly marked, and there are things about art and artistic success that can probably never be fully clear because they are not fully knowable. The following essays present numerous provocative ways in which honors educators can continue fostering the creative arts in their programs. With their help, let us encourage our students to take advantage of their natural artistic gifts and to stand hopefully and respectfully in the face of their unknowing.

Authors' Bios

Ellen B. Buckner, RN, DSN, is Associate Professor of Nursing, University of Alabama at Birmingham. She initiated and currently coordinates the Nursing Departmental Honors Program at UAB, which is in its third year.

Leslie A. Donovan is an Assistant Professor of the University Honors Program at the University of New Mexico. She has published other articles on nontraditional pedagogies as well as a book on women saints in Old English literature and a forthcoming article on women in *The Lord of the Rings* in an edited volume on the medieval backgrounds to J.R.R. Tolkien's fiction.

Janet S. Files is the Director of the Coastal Area Writing Project at Coastal Carolina University. She is a member of the Teaching Team and is Regional Coach for the South Carolina Reading Initiative, which serves over 3,200 teachers of literacy in the public schools of South Carolina.

Stephanie Fosnight is a May 2001 graduate of the College of St. Catherine with majors in English and philosophy and with a minor in Spanish. While a sophomore, she was editor of the college newspaper. Pursuing her dream to become a journalist, she will begin study in June 2002 at the Medill Graduate School of Journalism at Northwestern University.

Margaret Franson is Assistant Dean of Christ College, the Honors College of Valparaiso University in Indiana. She regularly offers a seminar on leadership for Christ College freshmen and teaches in the College's senior colloquium. She is a member of NCHC's Honors Advising and Major Scholarship Preparation Committee.

Cynthia Leach-Fuller, RN, BSN, is a Staff Nurse in intensive care working with critically ill medical and surgical patients. She employs music therapy whenever appropriate. She is currently enrolled in the Master of Science in Nursing program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, which will lead to her certification as a Nurse Practitioner. Ms. Leach-Fuller is the first graduate of the undergraduate Nursing Honors Program at UAB.

Page Laws is Professor of English and Director of the Honors Program at Norfolk State University. She is past president of the Virginia Collegiate Honors Council and has served as Coordinator of the NCHC Master Class in film and video. She is currently on sabbatical from NSU teaching in Austria, where she holds the Fulbright-Karl Franzens Distinguished Chair in Cultural Studies at the University of Graz.

L. Luis Lopez is a teacher of Greek and Roman Classical Literature, Latin, and Ancient Greek at Mesa State College, where he is also the Director of Academic Honors. Luis has published two books of poetry and has seen two of his plays on stage. He is also owner of a publishing company, Farolito Press.

NOTES

Diann A. McCabe is the Assistant Director of the University Honors Program at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, where she teaches “Teaching Poetry to Children” from time to time. She has a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing and organizes community efforts to support the arts.

Tammy Ostrander is the Honors Director at the College of St. Scholastica, where she also serves as Chair of the Communication and Theatre Arts Department. She was the Small College column editor for the National Honors Report for three years, and she holds an appointment to the Small College Honors Committee of the NCHC.

Todd Pierce is an artist living in Birmingham, Alabama and a graduate of the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s Honors Program. His work is aligned most closely, he feels, with the Abstract Expressionist Movement in modern painting.

Sara L. Sanders is a Professor of English at Coastal Carolina University, where she directed the university’s Honors Program from 1992-96. She currently teaches honors service-learning classes as well as courses in linguistics, literature, and composition.

Margaret C. Szumowski is an Assistant Professor of English at Springfield Technical Community College in Massachusetts. She has an M.A. in English from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Szumowski is a former Peace Corps Volunteer and is co-author with Bruce Hoffman of *English for the New Ethiopia* and of numerous essays on social justice. Her poetry has appeared in *The Massachusetts Review*, *River Styx*, *Willow Springs*, *Poetry East*, *Agni*, *River City*, *APR*, *Sojourners*, *The Christian Century*, *Commonweal*, and in a chapbook, *Ruby’s Cafe*. Tupelo Press published her poetry collection, *I Want This World*, in September, 2001. At Springfield Technical Community College, she teaches courses in poetry and fiction-writing.

Betsy West is an Assistant Professor in the College of Architecture at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where she also serves as Graduate Coordinator. She received her Master of Architecture degree from Yale University and is a practicing architect. In addition to teaching architectural studios and seminar classes, she has taught in the Honors Program at UNCC for the past three years.

Patricia B. Worrall is an Assistant Professor of English at Gainesville College. She has a doctorate in English from the University of Georgia. She has co-authored, with Brian Kline, “Building a Communications Learning Community,” which will appear this year in *Collaborative Teaching and Learning with Interactive Technologies: A Communication Perspective*, ed. Patricia Comeaux. Her interests include electronic pedagogy, learning communities, and rhetoric and composition.

NOTES

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Beginning in Honors: A Handbook by Samuel Schuman (1989, 53pp.). Advice on starting a new honors program. Covers budgets, recruiting students and faculty, physical plant, administrative concerns, curriculum design, and descriptions of some model programs. Members \$2.50. Non-members \$5.00.

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Teaching and Learning in Honors edited by Cheryl Fuiks and Larry Clark (2000, 128pp.). Discussion of central pedagogical issues in an honors context. Members \$2.50. Non-members \$5.00.